



Next Steps ... What Would Kilroy Write?



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Let's Get Started

- If you want a copy of these slides – provide an email and I will send
- Who is this guy speaking to us today?
- Who can write about the military?
- What genres can include the military?
- How to research the military
- How to get the details right
- Where to publish about the military?

Who is this guy speaking to us today?

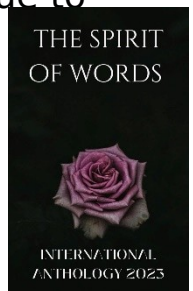
- Transplant into New Mexico
 - Have lived here long enough to no longer put the green chile on the side
 - I will let you guess where I grew up after you listen to me talk
- Fully retired from the U.S. Navy (carrier pilot) and Department of Defense as a civil servant
 - 44 years total federal service
- Been writing since high school
 - Every job I held always looked for someone who could write
- Switched from boring academic and other non-fiction to other genres when I was diagnosed with PTSD and retired on disability

Why do you want to listen?

- You have done genealogical research, but what are you going to do with the results?
 - Pass down handwritten notes to the family
 - Transcribe to digital format and share via the internet
 - Write some stories using that raw material
 - Publish those stories in a manner that people you do not know (everyone other

An example

- My maternal grandmother passed on without really telling her story of how she immigrated to the United States
- My mother claimed she did not know
 - I did not believe her
- I did the research, which included a trip to the ancestral homeland
- Found out as much of the story as could be found out
- Published it in a way that there were messages that the reader could learn from reading the story
 - You can find out many things about your ancestors
 - You will learn there are things about your family that have been hidden
 - You will likely uncover an uncomfortable past
 - And some of those things will never be known
 - You will have to decide how much of the “truth” you will share or will you continue to recite the “official” version of history
 - You will be able to connect with family you never knew
 - Much more satisfying than taking a trip to the ancestral homeland on a tour
 - Leave behind some breadcrumbs for your descendants to follow
- Publishing a straight report on your research is a hard sell to a publisher



Who can write your story?



Who can write about the military?

- The short answer is anyone can write about the military
- Examples (none of these authors served):
 - Alfred, Lord Tennyson [Charge of the Light Brigade]
 - Patrick O'Brian [Aubrey-Maturin novels]
 - Bernard Cornwell [Sharpe novels]
 - Tom Clancy [Cold War novels]
 - Mark Bowden [Black Hawk Down]
 - John Scalzi [Science Fiction]
 - Maya Banks [Romance]

Memoir or Biography

- What is the purpose of writing about your experiences or someone else?
 - Document for the family?
 - Turn into a best-selling book?
 - Keep yourself busy and an excuse to not deal with the “honey-do” list?
- Can you describe what your father/sibling/child felt when on a mission?
 - Do you think they really ever told you what really went on?
 - Did they do an oral Veterans’ History Project interview?
 - <https://www.loc.gov/vets/>
 - Or tell their stories on social media sites?
 - <https://navy.togetherweserved.com/usn/servlet/tws.webapp.WebApps?cmd=ShadowBoxProfile&type=Person&ID=442507>
- Can you write and capture what it was like on patrol in the jungles of Vietnam or the caves in Afghanistan if you have never been there?
 - You can probably get the facts correct

History or Historical Fiction

- Kathleen Rogers outlines her husband's military career and then writes about life as a military spouse
 - The reader learns both about the husband's career and the wife's dealing with having been a military spouse
 - There are lessons to be learned from reading her stories
 - Life as a military spouse was often very difficult; e.g., battling bulimia
- Historical fiction offers interesting options for writers
 - Aubrey-Maturin model (20 novels)
 - Primary source is a record of Courts Martial
 - Sharpe model (23 novels)
 - Primary impetus for the story are unexplained events
 - Write a story that is about the battle and includes the role your family member played
 - Fictionalize to make it work

Some other genres that can include your ancestors and the military?

- Adventure / Thriller
- Leadership
- Romance – especially with Navy pilots
- Photography
- Humor

Adventure / Thriller

- James D. "Jim" Grant, A.K.A. Lee Childs, has written the commercially successful Jack Reacher series about a former U.S. military policeman
 - Lee Childs is British, never served, has never been in law enforcement, and gets criticized for being commercial
 - But he generally gets it exactly right
- Adventure and thrillers often involve the military due to high tech, neat weapons, dangerous locations, high stakes, etc.

Leadership

- “Leadership is the art of inspiring, guiding, and directing bodies of men so that they ardently desire to do what the leader wishes.”
 - *War Instructions: United States Navy, 1944*
- Were you ancestors someone who displayed leadership to a degree that we can still learn from their experience today
- Consider leadership at the pointy end of the spear
 - Is there a comparable parallel in the civilian sector?
 - Anyone read *Killer Angels*?
 - Colonel Chamberlin’s speech to his men about to leave Gettysburg? <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uTZSwgnWtuA>

Romance

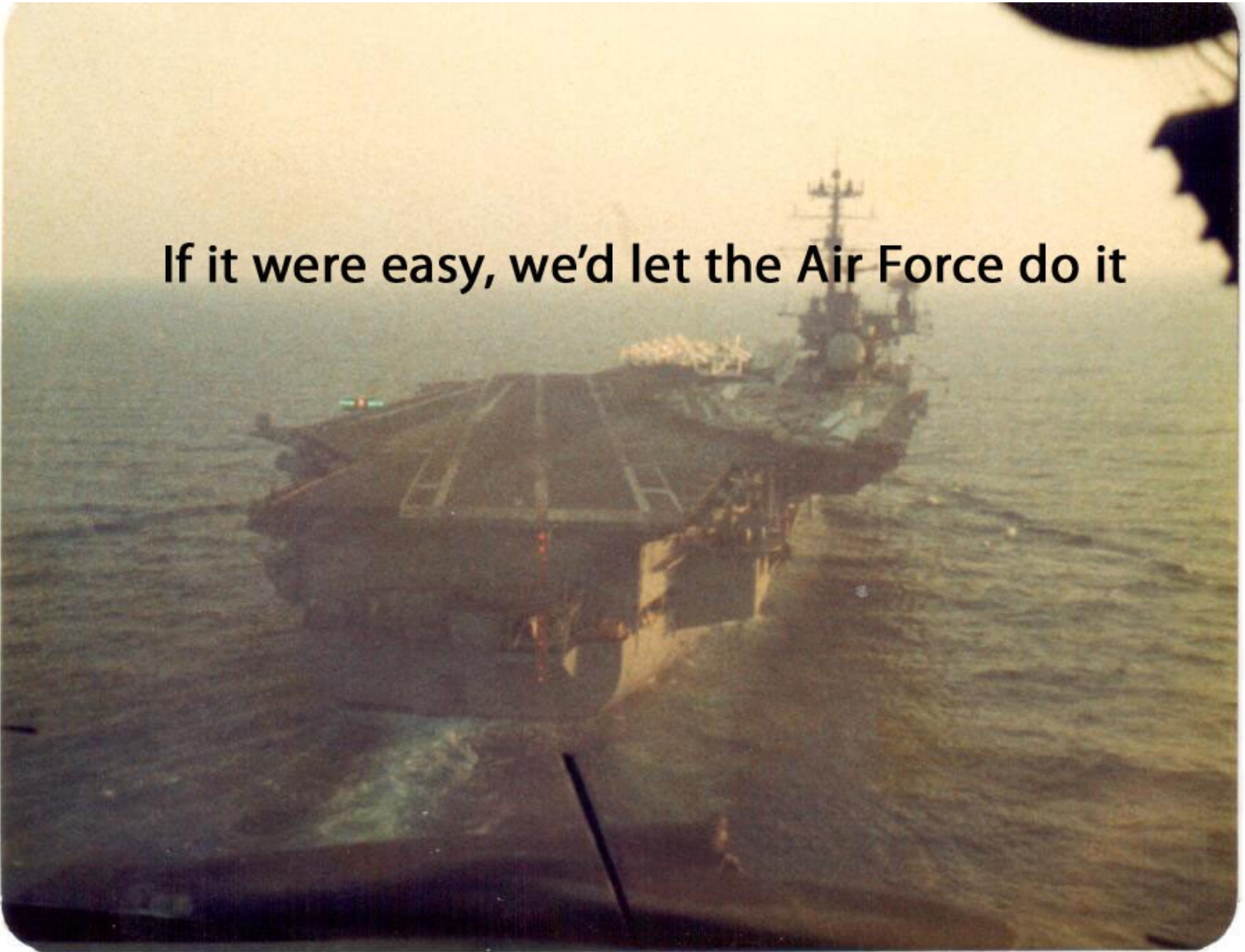
- The most-read genre has its own listing in Goodreads: Popular Military Romance with 9,151 entries
- Amazon.com lists >60,000 books under Military Romance
- Anyone here ever see From Here to Eternity?
 - Do you all remember the scene on the beach with Sgt. Milton Warden [played by Burt Lancaster] and Karen Holmes [played by Deborah Kerr]?
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EHYd9DRhh-c>
- Great opportunities to explore romance in exotic locations, cross-rank fraternization, “me too,” etc.

Photography

- Watch any pilot, any tank driver, any sailor when they find a photo book about their airplane, their tank, their ship, their unit
- Most historical photos can be obtained from the national archives or military historical centers for free
<https://www.archives.gov/research/military/ww2/photos>
- Package up the photos and then start doing the research to describe each photo
 - <https://www.amazon.com/Military-History-Definitive-Objects-Warfare/dp/0756698383/>
- Sell to members of unit or platform groups on Facebook
 - <https://www.amazon.com/Curtiss-SOC-Seagull-Naval-Fighters/dp/0984611428/>

Humor

- Who remembers the Humor in Uniform section of *Reader's Digest*?
 - Still being written <https://www.rd.com/jokes/military/>
- Anyone read Joseph Heller's *Catch-22*?
 - Or at least seen the movie?
- Is it more likely a combat veteran will tell you what it was really like or share a funny story with you?
- Does it make a difference if you poke fun at the military but never served?



If it were easy, we'd let the Air Force do it

How to research the military



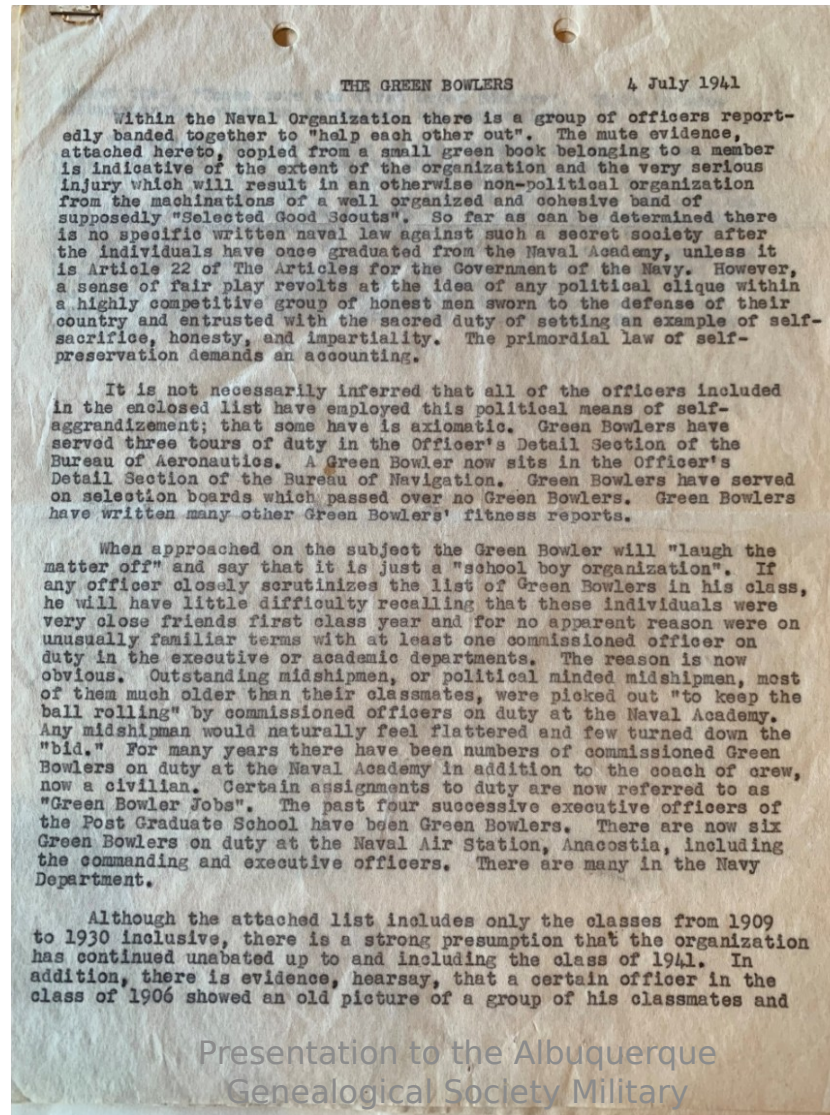
How to research the military



Logic of how to find the answer

- Owner served in World War II
- Uniform is U.S. Navy
- Google search for U.S. Navy uniforms World War II
 - Uniforms of the U.S. Navy 1942-1943
 - [wwii us navy uniform regulations](#)
- ww2 navy aviation uniform patches
 - <https://www.ebay.com/itm/NAVAL-AVIATION-AERIAL-GUNNER-US-Navy-WW2-Original-Uniform-Squadron-Patch-/163624663203?oid=163514448354>

How to research the military



Official Records

- <https://www.archives.gov/veterans/military-service-records>
- <https://www.archives.gov/college-park>
- <https://www.history.navy.mil/>
- <https://www.archives.gov/>
- <https://www.togetherweserved.com/>
- *Caveat Emptor*
 - It is not all there

Other General Sources

- History books to get the context
 - What else was going on at the time and place
- Biographies, autobiographies, memoirs
- Subject matter books
 - E.g. books about specific weapons systems
- Web searches
- Movies
 - Excellent ways to “see” and hear dialog set at the time
 - *Caveat Emptor*

How to get the details right

- How will you get the details right?
 - History or historical fiction?
 - *Letters From My Son*
- You **need** a technical expert or access to historical or technical information
- It will matter when these experts served, what military service or branch they were in, and where they were stationed

Examples of pesky details

- Uniforms
 - Correct for season – Summer or Winter?
 - Correct for time frame of writing – Navy greens
 - Correct for location – combat or embassy duty?
 - Appropriate awards
- Ranks
 - Why is the character called “Mister Roberts”?
 - Why is the first officer rank either an: O-1, and Ensign (ENS), a Second Lieutenant (2LT or a 2ndLt or a 2d Lt)
- Jargon
 - “Over” and “out”
 - “Roger” and ‘wilco”

More examples of pesky details

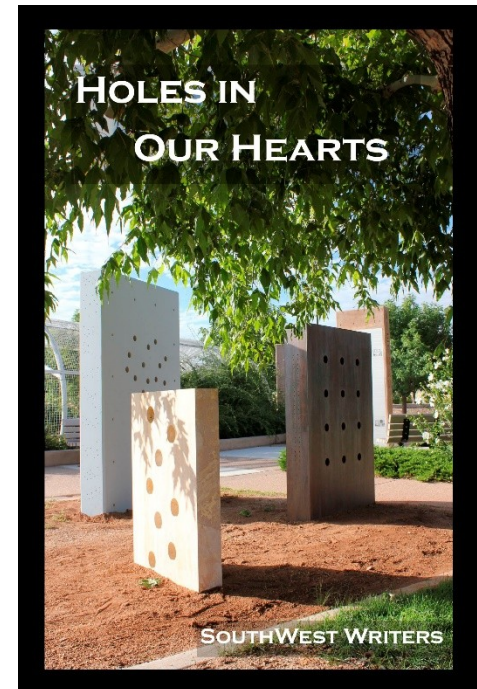
- In the Army and Marines, enlisted personnel above the rank of Corporal are some type of Sergeant
 - You cannot go wrong by calling them Sergeant
- In the Navy, above the rank of Seaman, the next three grades are Petty Officers
 - Third class, Second class, First Class, Chief, Senior Chief, Master Chief
 - They were called by their last names until they reach the rank of Chief Petty Officer
 - You rarely would call them Petty Officer unless at a formal function like a Captain's Mast or writing up for an award

Where to publish about the military?

- Military-oriented outlets
 - Hundreds of publishers, journals, blogs, newspapers
 - Search by service, warfare specialty, units, conflicts
- Non-military outlets
 - Memoir or Biography
 - History or Historical Fiction
 - Adventure / Thriller
 - Romance – especially with Navy pilots
 - Leadership
 - Photography
 - Humor
- Self-publish

How about an anthology?

- Collect short stories and publish them as an anthology
- May be easier than getting a short story published by itself
- Holes in Our Hearts
- Editing challenges



The last slide

- **You** can do it
 - Tularosa 6th grader wrote poem to honor Uncle who was a combat medic
- For more information, send me an email at jimtritten@comcast.net
- Join SouthWest Writers (SWW)
- Attend the MWSA writing conference September 2024 in San Diego
 - <https://www.mwsadispatches.com/events/2024-conference>
- Who want to guess where I grew up?

